



**British army soldier teaches mine-clearance techniques to Afghan National Army officer cadets at Officer Candidate School in Kabul, Afghanistan**

# Lost in Translation

## The Challenge of Exporting Models of Civil-Military Relations

BY LAURA R. CLEARY

Once viewed as an interesting but minor subset of the broader disciplines of international relations and security studies, the promotion of civil-military relations (CMR), under the new and broader banners of security sector reform (SSR) and stabilization, has become a critical component of foreign, defense, and development policies of former colonial powers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it would be fair to say that the promotion of CMR/SSR has become a booming industry. The United States, United Kingdom (UK), Germany, and France have sanctioned the development of this industry through the award of contracts to preferred service providers. There appears, however, to be little consistency, coordination, monitoring, or regulation in the selection of service providers or in the way in which the service is provided.<sup>2</sup>

**Dr. Laura R. Cleary is a Senior Lecturer in the Centre for International Security and Resilience at Cranfield University, United Kingdom.**

The “Great Powers” have outsourced the delivery of their foreign policies. The result is that, while those states may be in agreement on the requirement to improve CMR or reform the security sector in developing countries, there is little or no agreement on how this should be done, either between the countries or between their respective ministries. This lack of unity and coordination is apparent to recipient nations. As a result, the message that the West seeks to transmit is diluted, and it takes longer to identify the focal point for change and develop the critical mass required for reform. This is the first general point that needs to be understood. The second is that the Western definition and interpretation of CMR is not universally shared.<sup>3</sup>

Three names dominate the field of CMR: Samuel Huntington, Samuel Finer, and Morris Janowitz. Although these three men were apt to criticize each other on aspects of their respective theories,<sup>4</sup> they were essentially in agreement that stable, democratic civil-military relations were more likely if the military was professional, reflective of the society it served, and believed in an explicit principle of civil supremacy. In essence, their theories were predicated on what has come to be perceived as the Clausewitzian trinity: people, army, and government. Although there have been many studies conducted of civil-military relations in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America, the essential theory has remained the same.

Western academics tend to adopt a holistic approach to the study of CMR, looking at the way the military relates to both government and society. As in any academic discipline, there have been some splinter movements with individuals arguing that more emphasis should be placed on military-society relations and less on

government-military relations; but, on balance, recent theorists have sought to determine the ways in which the trinity of people, army, and government can be renewed.

The most recent and high profile example of this is Rebecca Schiff’s Concordance Theory, which stresses the need to develop a partnership between the military, government, and civil society if peace and stability are to be achieved.<sup>5</sup> While this theory has a certain degree of merit, if it is to be advocated outside of a North American or European context, then those promoting it need to be aware that the playing field in other parts of the world is not the same. In Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the focus is on military-political/administration relations; society does not really factor into the equation. The military views politicians with opprobrium because they are perceived as ignorant, uneducated, and corrupt. Civil servants are viewed with disdain because they are perceived as overly bureaucratic, inefficient, and incompetent. In turn, the military is viewed as distant, superior, and potentially dangerous to political stability. As for the citizenry, they are viewed as largely uninterested in, and generally ignorant of, security. Thus, the fundamental ingredients for the development of effective partnerships are missing. There is no mutual understanding, respect, or trust.

Douglas Bland has argued that extant and new theories on CMR fail in two ways: “They are narrowly conceived and miss critical aspects of the problem and they are too bound by the culture and national politics of their proponents.”<sup>6</sup> This is a valid assessment and I would suggest that the absence of a rigorous theoretical framework means that the practices being promoted through stabilization activities in Iraq and Afghanistan or SSR initiatives in Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, and Latin America

are as likely to cause harm as good. Based on 10 years of support to, and observation of, the UK Defence Diplomacy mission,<sup>7</sup> I have identified four factors that make the task of exporting models of CMR particularly challenging:

- ❖ nature of the colonial legacy
- ❖ alternative realities of the strategic context
- ❖ varying issues of concern within the civil-military relationship
- ❖ different cultural reference points.

Each of these points will be illustrated in turn.

### Nature of the Colonial Legacy

Although colonialism is generally assessed in terms of its economic impact, specifically with reference to the distortion of colonial economies, it also had a significant influence on political and administrative structures within those colonies. Great Britain's footprint in both Asia and Africa is marked by the establishment of systems of administrative and military control. In Asia, Britain was able to build upon a preexisting system of civil service administration that dated from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, if not earlier. The Hindu kingdoms of the subcontinent consisted of "an organised governmental bureaucracy, categorized into departments with several classes of officials."<sup>8</sup> The individuals were selected on the basis of "their wisdom and high character," and they served the ruler and not the state.<sup>9</sup> During the period of the Mughal Empire (1526–1858), this system of administration would be further developed with quasi-autonomous layers (central, subcentral, and local) performing specific functions to manage the affairs of the empire.<sup>10</sup> There was continued emphasis on the merits of candidates who needed to demonstrate "perfect

capacity, complete experience, great integrity, ample understanding and extreme diligence."<sup>11</sup> The most important quality, however, remained their loyalty to the emperor.

Great Britain adapted this basic framework to suit its own ends, refining the recruitment criteria, and formalizing the basis for compensation, promotion, and training. By the time of Indian independence in 1947, the transition from a personalized service to a state and public service was well advanced, as was the development of a culture based on meritocracy and competition. There were, however, other cultural trends in evidence, namely those of red tape, institutionalized racism, cultural superiority,<sup>12</sup> and "wanton factionalism, polarization, and regionalism."<sup>13</sup> These are traits that continue to bedevil attempts to govern the states in South Asia.

**Great Britain's footprint in both Asia and Africa is marked by the establishment of systems of administrative and military control**

In Africa, the experience was rather different. European colonial powers in many cases created administrative systems from scratch and staffed those bureaucracies not with members of the indigenous population but with Europeans. As Martin Meredith has outlined in his seminal work *The State of Africa*,<sup>14</sup> in many cases when the colonial powers withdrew, there were few qualified people to staff the civil service. While that situation has gradually changed through the expansion of education and reforms that have targeted administrative structures and pay, for many African states there is a continued sense that the civil service lacks capacity. For example, the Nigerian civil service has been

described as “oversized and under-skilled” with employees lacking the “appropriate technical skills needed for their assignment,”<sup>15</sup> a statement that is equally relevant in many parts of Africa. Although reforms of the civil service may have been imposed by military regimes or proposed by democratic governments and the World Bank, it has all been to little or no avail. Reforms have tended to be superficial rather than fundamental, focusing on pay and structures rather than on enhancing core competencies. Thus, in both South Asia and Africa, the perception remains that the civil service is overly bureaucratic, with multiple mini-bureaucracies existing within the whole, and is deeply politicized and manifestly corrupt.

### **Great Britain provides technical training required to proclaim that an individual is an expert in the use of force, and thus a professional**

As a result of the colonial legacy and subsequent failure to do anything other than tinker with that inheritance, it has proven difficult for the civil service to act as a stabilizing or unifying force in either Asia or Africa. This situation has been further exacerbated in those countries in which the military has frequently intervened in politics. As part of the process, the military has co-opted the civil service to provide it with the cover of legitimacy. As a result, neither organization is trusted by the people.

The reasons for a lack of trust in the military are slightly different from those pertaining to the civil service administration. With respect to military organizations, although the colonial powers may have withdrawn, they maintained an “interest” in the armed forces by continuing to invest in the shaping of force

structures, development of doctrine, provision of education and training, and sale or gifting of weapons and platforms. We can see in both Africa and Asia that the regimental system inherited from the British continues to frame the way in which the armed forces of those states relate to their own societies, their history, and their cultural values.<sup>16</sup> More often than not, an officer in West Africa or South Asia believes that he has more in common with a British officer than he does with citizens in his own country. This belief is in part engendered through exposure to the British military education system.

It has been argued that the throughput of officers at educational establishments such as the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst (RMAS), Royal College of Defence Studies, Joint Services Command and Staff College (JSCSC), and Defence Academy’s College of Management and Technology helps to maintain historical and cultural reference points, but what it also succeeds in doing is exposing officers to alternative ideas and practices, an opportunity denied to the majority of civil servants and politicians. The result is that the officer corps appears more professional and certainly more cosmopolitan than its civilian counterparts.

The United Kingdom has tended to justify this activity with the argument that by professionalizing the armed forces of newly independent states, a greater stability would be created, an argument that is now used in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan. The reality, however, is that much of the education and training provided by the UK is technically specific (for example, specialist-to-arms training at RMAS, staff officer training at JSCSC, and human rights training conducted in-country). Thus, Great Britain provides technical training required

to proclaim that an individual is an expert in the use of force, and thus a professional.<sup>17</sup>

What Great Britain, the United States, France, and China also succeed in doing through their long courses at officer training schools and command and staff colleges is exposing individuals to their own organizational cultures, which may then mean that the officer or group of officers become disconnected from their own civilian authority and wider society. At no point is the same level of organized or targeted investment being made in the civilian authority structures, and thus those structures are unable to assert the “control” of the military advocated in theories of CMR. Ideally, states should be as focused on the professionalization of their civil services and political structures as they are on the professionalization of the armed forces.

So what is Great Britain’s legacy in Asia and Africa? It is widely recognized that the United Kingdom has influenced the civil service and armed forces structures, as well as legal, educational, and transport systems. These influences are generally viewed as positive benefits of colonialism, but there is a sense that postcolonial governments squandered the opportunities for further development.<sup>18</sup> The inherited systems have changed little since independence, apart from growing in size and scope. Attempts at reform—whether that is the application of new public management in the civil service or the promotion of jointery in the Indian armed forces,<sup>19</sup> for example—have had little lasting effect. Meanwhile, the UK has initiated a series of civil service reforms since the 1950s and is in the process of streamlining both the civil service and armed forces, all of which has had an impact on missions, ethos, and structure. As a result, when the UK looks

at the systems in South Asia or Africa, the tendency is to think, “Look how far we have come,” although this response is sometimes tinged with nostalgia, particularly among the military as it reflects on lost privileges. When South Asians or Africans look at the UK, they often wonder how those reforms were achieved because they appear impossible within their own contexts. Indeed, they want to know *what* to do, but more importantly, they want to know *how* to do it.

What is the process for successful reform? As the United Kingdom places a renewed emphasis on soft power and unveils its new strategy for building security overseas, it needs not only to spend more money, but also identify better ways in which to address fundamental questions within defense reform.<sup>20</sup> The UK has managed to maintain a degree of traction in former colonial states as a result of shared history and institutional structures. The colonial power and colonies could be described as having been on parallel tracks, but as the strategic context continues to evolve, those paths and reference points will diverge even more.

### **Alternative Realities of the Strategic Context**

The decision by any of the Western powers to engage in security sector reform elsewhere is determined by an analysis of its own strategic context. The United Kingdom undertakes this assessment on a regular basis, and the conclusions are published in a range of documents including the National Security Strategy (2010), *Strategic Defence & Security Review* (2010), and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s strategy document, *Better World, Better Britain* (2008).

Since 2002, the United Kingdom has placed an increasing emphasis on countering

terrorism both nationally and internationally. It has adopted a combined approach, supporting the United States in its application of the strategy of preemption, most notably in Afghanistan and Iraq, but also siding with its European partners by promoting a strategy

**for most people today, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event**

of prevention and tackling the root causes of terrorism such as poverty and illiteracy. In some areas, such as the Middle East, this dual approach has met with little favor because too much emphasis has been placed on the exercise of hard power. In other regions, such as South Asia, the UK has succeeded in maintaining a convincing balance, using its historical ties to the region to encourage alternative patterns of behavior. The UK has, through its defense relations activities,<sup>21</sup> sought to exercise hard and soft power simultaneously, and it chose to do so long before the United States ever advocated “smart power.”

Although the United Kingdom and many states share a concern over terrorism, the scale of the problem is different. In the 40-year period since the beginning of the Irish Republican Army terrorist campaign, the number of British citizens killed in terrorist attacks was just under 4,000, including those killed on 9/11 and 7/7. As tragic as these deaths are, the number is low compared to the loss of life in Pakistan between 2003 and 2008, for example.

We can see a similar trend in many other parts of the world. While the organizations responsible for the attacks may vary from country to country, the truth is that

both their origins and their effects tend to be local. This has been clearly illustrated in Nigeria by the activities of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta during October 2010, the attacks by Boko Haram (which means “Western education is a sin” in the Hausa language) on police headquarters in Abuja in June 2011, and again in August on the United Nations headquarters, or through the frequent rounds of ethnic and religious conflict in Jos, Nigeria, and the surrounding area. A purely military response, as previously advocated by the United States, is insufficient and can prove counterproductive in terms of managing internal security issues. This is the strategic reality on the ground for many countries that have loosely subscribed to the war on terror.

The strategic context for many states around the world tends to be focused on internal issues: political, economic, social, and environmental—so-called human security. This trend is not new; indeed, in 1994 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) attempted to capture the emerging trend in its *Human Development Report*. The authors declared that for too long the concept of security has been shaped by the potential for conflict between states; security has been equated with threats to a country’s borders; and nations have sought arms to protect their security. For most people today, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event. Job security, income security, health security, environmental security, security from crime—these are the emerging concerns of human security all over the world.<sup>22</sup>

Since 1994, numerous constitutions, security doctrines, and protocols have adopted as their starting point this new

conceptual framework for security, although words do not always match deeds. In the case of the African Union, recent attempts to devise strategies for peace and security on the continent have been frustrated by the diverse ways in which security is interpreted and pursued. Although the “Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union”<sup>23</sup> reflects the position adopted by UNDP in 1994, national approaches to attaining national and regional security remain at odds with the declaration. Many African countries continue to respond to a range of threats within their own countries through the deployment of military and paramilitary forces rather than through a concentrated effort to improve governance.<sup>24</sup> Those countries that view themselves as being more militarily capable than their neighbors tend to focus on hard rather than soft security responses to conflict both at home and abroad. Their disregard for the “niceties” of a legal framework has negative consequences within the operational environment, as evidenced by the numerous cases over the last few years of the abuse of combatants and civilians.<sup>25</sup> Thus, we see two dominant trends within the African context, but these are not exclusive to the region. The first is a failure to systematically analyze the national strategic context and to use that analysis to inform the development of relevant policies that will result in improved capabilities. The second is the tendency to over-militarize or over-securitize responses to risks and challenges.

As John Allen Williams has noted, a central assumption of all CMR theories is that the threat a military is tasked to confront has a significant impact on relations with civil society.<sup>26</sup> When the nature of the existential threat changes, so too should the

relationship between the military and society. In countries such as the United States, UK, France, and Germany, the post–Cold War threat environment has led to the proclamation of a postmodern military. The hallmark of such an organization is a “volunteer force, more multipurpose in mission, increasingly androgynous in make up and ethos, and with a greater permeability with civilian society.”<sup>27</sup>

As Williams has noted, traditional military culture is confronted by a number of challenges such as cultural relativism and the imposition of nonmilitary, social, ethical, and political criteria of evaluation on the military.<sup>28</sup> It is these postmodern militaries, and the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and consultancies abounding in security sector reform, that are seeking to provide advice on ideal forms of civil-military relations to militaries and governments that are still effectively classed as being within the “modern or late modern era,” meaning that the military is comprised of “a combination of conscripted lower ranks or militia and a professional officer corps, are war-oriented in mission, [are] masculine in makeup and ethos, and sharply differentiated in structure and culture from civilian society.”<sup>29</sup> The reference points are at complete variance, and thus the perception of what is an appropriate role for the military is also divergent.

Looking around the world, we see different military agendas: nation-building, national defense, and regime defense. With respect to the first role, there is an assumption within theories of civil-military relations that the military can act as a benign organ of national unity. It is argued that the integration of different nationalities or ethnicities into the armed forces can make a significant contribution to the process of nation-building.<sup>30</sup> The reality,

however, has proven different. Military governments in deeply divided societies have usually been unable or unwilling to contain internal conflicts.<sup>31</sup> Thus, instead of unifying the nation, we have seen the gradual drifting apart of the military and the society it was intended to serve.

There are a number of states that remain preoccupied with the role of national defense. In Latin America, militaries are fixated on issues pertaining to the defense of national sovereignty and protection of territorial integrity, concerns shared by some countries in Central and Eastern Europe, which are attempting to establish themselves as states (Kosovo), or to defend themselves against further aggression (Georgia).

In countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, the military may express an interest in establishing the parameters for political neutrality, but their most recent lived experience is of regime defense. They require explicit guidance on how to orientate themselves to operate in an apolitical fashion in accordance with the law and subordinate to the legal and political authority of civilian political masters. Advising exactly how to achieve that is difficult; the last time England's military actively intervened in politics was at the time of the Civil War (1642–1645) and the subsequent restoration of the monarchy in 1660 when General George Monck played the role of kingmaker. In Pakistan, the military last intervened in politics in 1999 when General Pervez Musharraf assumed power in an attempt to root out corruption, although in March 2009 the military was placed on alert when President Asif Ali Zardari was at odds with his opponent Nawaz Sharif. In Bangladesh, the military established a caretaker government in 2007, and

in 2008, in the run-up to elections in Nepal, there were strong concerns that it would seize control of the government.

An emphasis on regime defense is counter to the prescriptions of how a military should behave as made by the classical theorists of CMR. Too much of the literature describes the nature of the problem rather than ways a transition can be successfully achieved. And that is the question most frequently asked by those on the receiving end of defense and security sector reform assistance: How do we adopt civilian control and maintain our security?

### **Issues of Concern**

In assessing CMR or the state of the security sector in developing countries, Western donors tend to focus on levels of professionalism, extent of corruption, representativeness of the security services, existence or absence of civil society organizations (CSOs), and degree of accountability and transparency. The prevailing attitude is that if professionalism of the armed forces could be increased, corruption rooted out and CSOs introduced, then accountability and good governance would increase and a stable and secure society would appear.<sup>32</sup> This agenda is primarily that of the donors rather than the recipients. Indeed, there is a desire for improved levels of governance, but the Western prescription is not easy to swallow. The issues of concern in many states are the true nature of civil, civilian, and democratic control; professionalism; politicization; and how exactly the military should disengage from politics.

**Civil, Civilian, and Democratic Control of the Armed Forces.** One of the challenges of promoting new models of CMR is simply trying to guarantee conceptual clarity. The literature refers to controlling the

civil-military relationship, whether that is through civilian or democratic control. The first problem that is encountered is the use of the word *control*, which in many languages is pejorative, implying a dictatorial approach, when what is actually being prescribed is a more collaborative relationship.<sup>33</sup> It may be of value in some instances to replace the word with *management*, which implies the generation of capability through careful planning and the efficient and effective use of resources.<sup>34</sup> The use of the word management also allows attention to be directed to the functions that need to be performed in order to generate the capability to provide security: planning, organizing, commanding (or leading or directing), coordinating, and eventually controlling.<sup>35</sup> Whether or not management is adopted in lieu of control, the language used should imply partnership in the decisionmaking process.

The second problem is that all too frequently the terms *civil*, *civilian*, and *democratic control* of the armed forces are used synonymously. To my mind, however, they are distinct but related concepts. According to David Chuter, civil control refers to the allegiance that the armed forces or more broadly, the security forces owe to the *civis* or the state.<sup>36</sup> That allegiance should be based in law and might be stated in a constitution, armed forces act, doctrine, or code of conduct. The point is that all members of the armed forces should know to whom they owe allegiance and whom they serve.

Civilian management is then layered over civil control. *Civilian management* refers to the appointment of civilians to positions of responsibility in governance and management of the security services. It should refer to more than just the appointment of civilian

ministers and incorporate the role of civilians at various administrative levels within ministries of defense, foreign affairs, finance, or within the legislative branch. The achievement of civilian management often requires

**civil servants operating in a patronage-based system are deemed to serve the interests of their political masters, not the interests of the nation**

a change in the way information is handled and transmitted, and it also requires a review of decisionmaking and management practices more broadly.

The concept of civilian control or management often proves problematic in a range of countries undergoing defense and security sector reform. For reasons detailed above, civilian politicians and civil servants may not be trusted by the military to make good decisions or implement policy in such a way as to result in military effectiveness. Furthermore, those civil servants operating in a patronage-based system are deemed to serve the interests of their political masters, not the interests of the nation. Military personnel view themselves as the sole guardians of the national interest. In the absence of a modicum of respect and trust, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to accept the subordination of the military to civilian control. It is for this reason that we should move the debate away from the types of people placed into positions of responsibility to an examination of the process through which the management function is exercised. The third layer of democratic management then becomes critically important.

Democratic management of the armed forces refers essentially to the process of

decisionmaking. As Robin Luckham has acknowledged, some of the largest democratic deficits are found in the security sector.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, there is a need to develop institutional control mechanisms, oversight, and professional norms.<sup>38</sup> Thomas Bruneau and Floriana Matei suggest that institutional control mechanisms can manifest themselves in a clear legal framework, the establishment of a Ministry of Defense or a National Security

**members of the armed forces believe that their politicians lack security literacy, are unwilling to engage in matters of state security, and are more likely to be part of the problem than part of the solution**

Council, the existence of parliamentary committees with authority over policy and budgets, and transparent and apolitical officer promotion processes.<sup>39</sup> With respect to oversight, they are concerned with whether civilians in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, alongside the media, NGOs, and think tanks can in fact keep track of what the defense and security forces do. For Bruneau and Matei, it is the professionalism of the armed forces that is critical to the success of the other two control mechanisms. They are not alone in this perspective.

**Professionalism.** As noted above, Huntington, Finer, and Janowitz, in their respective works and to varying degrees, stressed the need for a professional armed force. According to Huntington, professionalism comprises three elements: expertise, social responsibility, and corporate loyalty to fellow practitioners.<sup>40</sup> Many armies would argue that they meet those criteria. Ask them, however, whether the

civil service in their countries is professional, and they will respond that the service falls short on social responsibility. Ask them to define a professional politician, and the most frequent response is that “a professional politician is a professional liar.”<sup>41</sup> In many developing democracies, a politician may at best have a secondary school education, or at worst may be illiterate. There is little or no attempt to provide an induction into the parliament for new members, and those individuals therefore lack the ability to draft legislation or conduct oversight. This is a significant concern but particularly so when we consider the seriousness of the internal security situation in many of these countries. Members of the armed forces believe that their politicians lack security literacy, are unwilling to engage in matters of state security, and are more likely to be part of the problem than part of the solution. Thus, among the military of many transitional democracies, there is a desire to see the focus of CMR shift from the professionalism of the military to the professionalism of the civilians, both within the civil service and political echelons.

To achieve that end requires education and training. While within various SSR initiatives there are programs to educate politicians on practices within parliamentary systems or to finance the appointment of civil servants in support of parliamentary committees, politicians and civil servants are not brought together with their military counterparts often enough to generate a discussion and engender respect and trust. Educating these groups in isolation from one another limits the potential for meaningful dialogue, particularly when different service providers funded by different nations seek to provide those programs. A great deal of emphasis is placed by both the UK and the United States on the comprehensive

approach, but that needs to occur not only on the battlefield, but also in the planning and delivery of the stabilization undertaking. To date, multinational coordinated responses remain in short supply.

**Politicization.** Related to the point above is the concern expressed over the extent of the politicization of the armed forces, civil service, and security as a whole. Given the immaturity of many of the world's democracies, we still tend to see radical shifts in policy depending on who is in power. There is no consensus between the parties as to what is in the national interest, and it appears that the parties are more interested in political point scoring. Since the pursuit of short-term electoral interests is the order of the day, there is little incentive to commit to longer term strategic planning.<sup>42</sup> It is not, however, simply issues that are politicized, but structures too. For many developing democracies, the rank structures of both the civil service administration and security forces have been politicized. Despite laws and rhetoric proclaiming the existence of a meritocracy, at the senior levels of organizations, promotion becomes dependent on who one knows rather than what one knows. This in turn creates closed networks in terms of decisionmaking, has an impact on levels of accountability and transparency within an organization, and generates resentment within the ranks. Individuals are loath to criticize their line managers and their services as a whole if it will ruin their chances for promotion and increased financial remuneration. So if governments are truly committed to improving levels of governance, then there is a clear need for the depoliticization of the promotion process and better career planning. Yet this is unlikely to occur without strong political will and a wider cultural change.

**How Can the Military Disengage from Politics?** Political will and cultural change are also required if militaries are to withdraw from politics and become apolitical. Western theories of CMR are predicated on a belief that apolitical militaries are essential for democratic security. They are—but what those theories do not adequately address is how a military transitions from being political to nonpolitical. Various authors have discussed the attributes of political armies, or the way in which military regimes hand over power to civilians, be it through a negotiated settlement as in Chile or the orchestration of democratic elections as in Nigeria or Ghana. But there is little literature on how to secure that change over the longer term. It is recognized that, with regard to the political domain, it is best if armies remain in their barracks, but how do we ensure that politicians keep out of those same barracks? This is a central question with which theories of civil-military relations should be engaged.

Far more work needs to be done on creating and enforcing the right type of legal framework to ensure the political neutrality of the armed forces, but we also need to examine the development of doctrine and training, and, perhaps most importantly, the sensitization of civilians and military to the correct forms of behavior in democracies. This last point relates essentially to a change in organizational culture within both military and civilian organizations. As part of that process, we should examine how those respective organizations can become more representative of the societies they serve. By representative I do not mean solely reflective of ethnic or social composition, which is how representativeness is normally understood within theories of CMR, but reflective of the emerging democratic values. Both social composition and values need to be represented within democratic armed forces. At present, however,

Western theorists have given insufficient thought as to how to achieve that.

### Varying Cultural Reference Points

So much of what is prescribed within SSR programs is put forward to advance Western interests and is predicated on Western cultural values. In promoting reform, the benefits of democracy are presumed to be universally self-evident. It is assumed that in a system in which free and fair elections prevail, politicians duly elected have legitimacy bestowed upon them through an electoral mandate and will fulfill their duties in accordance with the rule of law and by exercising appropriate leadership skills. Perhaps we presume too much.

For the fifth year in a row, Freedom House has reported that democracy is in retreat, citing evidence of rigged elections, restriction of civil liberties, limitations on the media, and inability of legislatures and judiciaries to ensure accountability.<sup>43</sup> There is also mounting evidence that democracy does not guarantee stability or security in the short term,<sup>44</sup> and yet we continue to advocate systems and approaches that are at odds with existing structural and cultural paradigms in target nations. Two issues—leadership and accountability—illustrate this argument.

**Leadership.** Romie Littrell has argued that “leadership myths in a culture give clues to how members see themselves and what constitutes good governance, ethical behaviour and fundamental courage.”<sup>45</sup> In a study of leadership mythology in England, he identifies certain common themes about appropriate leadership behavior:

- ❖ standing up for what is right
- ❖ heroically defending the nation
- ❖ heroically defending the nation in league with the common people.

These values are not only represented by leaders but also are reflected in the institutional arrangements established for governance, with the emphasis placed on justice, accountability, and public service on behalf of the nation.

These value sets are also reflected in American political institutional arrangements for obvious reasons, but the individual leader is not just heroic, but superheroic. A prototypical American superhero leader profile is one in which he fights for “noble personal and social goals, [is] strong, fast, brave and nimble, leverage[s] cutting edge technology and physical resources, creatively develop[s] and exploit[s] unique advantage, [is] self-reliant yet compassionate, actively manage[s] reputation and image and self-reflect[s] on identity and purpose.”<sup>46</sup>

In both the UK and the United States, the less powerful members of organizations find that the more powerful ones are approachable, decisions can be questioned, and inequality is not endorsed by either leaders or followers.<sup>47</sup> Those beliefs are then incorporated into management approaches such as delegated authority or mission command, the role of the “critical friend,” and the emphasis placed on “speaking truth to power”—approaches that are often at odds with the cultural values of the nations seeking assistance in defense and security sector reform. For example, in Kenya, where the UK has continuing military-to-military contacts and has supported wider SSR initiatives, the leadership style is largely hierarchical and authoritarian and the leader demands unquestioning personal allegiance from followers in return for which the leader should provide care and affection to subordinates as well as provide balance, challenge guidance, and inspiration.<sup>48</sup> Criticism of the leader and his policies would be deemed inappropriate, deeply insulting, and, if it were the military criticizing the politicians, a breach of the constitution.

Table. Comparison of Cultural Value Sets

	United Kingdom	United States	Arab World <sup>1</sup>	West Africa <sup>2</sup>
Power distance: extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally	35	40	80	77
Uncertainty avoidance: a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity	35	46	68	54
Individualism/collectivism: the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups	89	91	38	20
Masculine/feminine: the distribution of roles between genders	66	62	53	46
Long- /short-term orientation: values associated with long-term orientation are thrift and perseverance; values associated with short-term orientation are respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and protecting one's "face"	25	29	—	16

<sup>1</sup> The Arab world is deemed to consist of Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

<sup>2</sup> West Africa consists of Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone.

In societies where there is a high power-to-distance ratio, as in the case of Kenya, Thailand, and the Philippines, General Sir Richard Dannatt's criticisms of the Labour government's policies in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2006 would be viewed as an unforgivable breach of political neutrality of the military and good CMR.<sup>49</sup> In the UK, some politicians claimed that Dannatt had overstepped the mark, but service personnel generally believed that at least someone was listening and responding to their concerns, thus standing up for what was right.

The table, derived from the work of Geert Hofstede,<sup>50</sup> illustrates the different cultural value sets of the UK, the United States, and those countries in which these two powers have been most actively engaged in stabilization activities.

We should recognize, therefore, that the institutional models and systems with which we are most familiar, and seek to advocate elsewhere, encourage and are dependent upon certain types of leadership behavior that may be alien to the societies we seek to assist. The inherent problems of that are then further exposed when we examine the issue of accountability.

**Accountability.** The application of civil control and civilian and democratic management and the pursuit of professionalism in all sectors require the political will or leadership to initiate it in the first place and a belief that accountability is a necessary and desirable goal and process. Neither is guaranteed. In delivering activities in support of UK defense engagement, it has become evident that the way in which a society defines *accountability* has a direct bearing on the institutions and procedures through which it seeks to ensure it. So, for example, in Spanish, *accountability* means to count; thus, in Uruguay, the practice of accountability relates specifically to the annual report to the legislature on activities. It does not imply or necessitate any follow-up action by that parliament.

In the Slavic languages, there is no separate word for accountability, and its meaning is either subsumed within that of responsibility (in Russian, *ostvetstvennost*) or circumscribed by the use of the term public finance accountability (*publichnaya finansovaya podotchenost'*). These interpretations result in systems that focus primarily on expenditure.

What is often difficult to convey is the distinction in English between responsibility and accountability. *Responsibility* is understood in most languages as referring to the duties or tasks one undertakes, and to be *responsible* implies that an individual has some control or authority over the performance

of those duties. In English, accountability advances the concept of responsibility and implies that an individual should be able to explain and answer for his actions and may be legally obliged to do so.

The aim of accountability, as practiced in the UK and the United States, is not only to uncover wrongdoing but also to adopt corrective measures to ensure that individuals and institutions operate within the law. Justice and accountability are viewed as integral to society,<sup>51</sup> and thus overlapping and supportive systems and procedures are put into place to ensure it. In other cultures, the same value may not be placed on accountability and thus existing or proposed bureaucratic systems may prove inadequate to the task. Where do the fault lines lie?

- ❖ Powers of oversight and accountability may be guaranteed in the constitution or may exist in legislative procedures; however, they may not be exercised because legislators are unaware of those powers.
- ❖ Investigations into executive actions may be deemed inappropriate challenges to the leader.
- ❖ There is an assumption in the UK and the United States that effective systems of accountability are dependent on an impartial bureaucracy.<sup>52</sup> That assumption may not apply or can pose an inherent problem to clan- or tribal-based societies (for example, Kosovo, Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo).
- ❖ There is an increasing sense that demands for greater accountability and anticorruption campaigns are simply

another form of conditionality imposed by donors on aid. Given that target countries have seen so many conditions imposed in the past, they are willing to pay lip service to combating corruption, but may not be willing to take any meaningful action. There is also concern that those providing advice do not follow it in all instances. The failure to address allegations of sexual abuse by United Nations peacekeepers in the Balkans and Haiti in any meaningful way is cited as an example of this perfidy.

Leadership, personal responsibility, and accountability are integral to Western conceptions of, and prescriptions for, civil control and civilian and democratic management. If those prescriptions are to prove more than just well-funded exercises in futility, the models must take account of fundamental cultural differences.

## Conclusion

As CMR morphed into SSR, now SSR is morphing into stabilization. The inherent weaknesses and cultural biases of civil-military relations theory are now being exposed on a much larger canvas, and this could prove to be an issue of significant consequence. It is recognized in both the UK and the United States that government must review and seek to ensure that stabilization activities are conducted in more effective and efficient ways.<sup>53</sup> The prescriptions for reform, however, tend to focus on the internal business space of the organizations engaged in stabilization activities, not on the cultural and social realities of the countries requiring stabilization. As I have argued elsewhere, reform agendas are more likely to succeed if those providing assistance fully acknowledge the real structural, cultural, and strategic differences between them and those they seek to assist.<sup>54</sup> Until that occurs, the principles and practices we seek to impart will continue to be received politely, but there is little chance that they will be applied in the short to mid term, and thus there is little hope that stabilization will be achieved. PRISM

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Douglas L. Bland, "A Unified Theory of Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces and Society* 26, no. 7 (1999), 7; David Chuter, "Civil-Military Relations: Is There Really a Problem?" *Journal of Security Sector Management* 7, no. 2 (2009), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Francesco Mancini, *In Good Company? The Role of Business in Security Sector Reform* (London: Demos, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Chuter; James Burk, "Theories of Democratic Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces and Society* 29, no. 1 (2002).

<sup>4</sup> See Samuel Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1962), 23–60.

<sup>5</sup> Rebecca Schiff, "Civil-Military Relations Reconsidered: A Theory of Concordance," *Armed Forces and Society* 22, no. 1 (Fall 1995). Schiff has also published *The Military and Domestic Politics: A Concordance Theory of Civil-Military Relations* (Abingdon, Oxon: Cass Military Studies, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Bland, 8.

<sup>7</sup> See United Kingdom (UK) Ministry of Defence, *Defence Diplomacy: Strategic Defence Review Supporting Essay No. 4* (London: Crown Copyright, 1998), 12.

<sup>8</sup> Habib Zafarullah, Mohammad Mohabbat Khan, and Mohammad Habibur Rahman, "The Civil Service System of Bangladesh," in *Civil Service Systems in Asia*, ed. John P. Burns and Bidhya Bowornwathana (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2001), 26.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> John P. Burns and Bidhya Bowornwathana, "Asian Civil Service Systems in Comparative Perspective," *Civil Service Systems in Asia*, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Habib Zafarullah, "Shaping Public Management for Governance and Development: The Cases of Pakistan and Bangladesh," *International Journal of Organization Theory and Behaviour* 9, no. 3 (Fall 2006), 354.

<sup>14</sup> Martin Meredith, *The State of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence* (London: Free Press, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and Philip Osafo Kwaako, "Nigeria's Economic Reforms: Progress and Challenges," Working Paper No. 6 (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, March 2007).

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Mohamed Amin et al., *Defenders of Pakistan* (Lahore, Pakistan: Ferozsons Ltd., 1988).

<sup>17</sup> Moriss Janowitz argued that a *profession* was one in which individuals demonstrated a special skill, in the case of the military the use of force, a system of corporate administration, and a sense of identity. See *The Professional Soldier* (London: Free Press, 1964).

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Colonel (Ret.) Shiam Viduropola, Sri Lankan army, conducted on April 4, 2009; Zafarullah.

<sup>19</sup> Rahul Bedi, "Interview with Lt. Gen. Pankaj Joshi, Chief of India's Integrated Defence Staff," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, July 23, 2003, 32; Rahul Bedi, "Divided Interests," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, May 21, 2003, 18–24.

<sup>20</sup> UK Defence Attaché E, survey submitted on April 5, 2009; UK Defence Attaché S, survey submitted on April 1, 2009. See also Department for International Development, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence, *Building Stability Overseas Strategy* (London: Crown Copyright, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> UK defense relations activities are defined as the range of nonoperational international engagements conducted by the Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces in support of UK long-term foreign, defense, and wider security policy objectives. See UK Ministry of Defence, *Delivering Security in a Modern World, the Defence White Paper* (Norwich, UK: TSO, 2003).

<sup>22</sup> United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3.

<sup>23</sup> African Union, "Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, 2003, available at <[www.africa-union.org/root/au/organs/psc/Protocol\\_peace%20and%20security.pdf](http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/organs/psc/Protocol_peace%20and%20security.pdf)>.

<sup>24</sup> InterAfrica Group/Justice Africa, "African Union and Peace and Security," Issues Paper for the African Union Symposium, 2002, available at <[www.uneca.org/adfiii/docs/issuepn3.pdf](http://www.uneca.org/adfiii/docs/issuepn3.pdf)>.

<sup>25</sup> See Mats Berdal, *Building Peace after War* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> John Allen Williams, "The Military and Society Beyond the Post-Modern Era," *Orbis* 52, no. 2 (2008), 199–216.

<sup>27</sup> Edwin R. Micewski, "Leadership Responsibility in Post-Modern Armed Forces," available at <[www.bmlv.gv.at/pdf\\_pool/publikationen/10\\_cma\\_03\\_lrp.pdf](http://www.bmlv.gv.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/10_cma_03_lrp.pdf)>. See also Charles C. Moskos, John A. Williams, and David R. Segal, *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces after the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1.

<sup>28</sup> Williams.

<sup>29</sup> Moskos, Williams, and Segal, 1–2.

<sup>30</sup> Janowitz made this argument in *The Professional Soldier*, but it has also been advanced in the writings of Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt in their edited volume *Political Armies: The Military and National Building in the Age of Democracy* (London: Zed Books, 2002). We can also see this notion advanced within the policy framework of postconflict state- and nation-building.

<sup>31</sup> Gunnar Simonsen, “Building ‘National’ Armies—Building Nations?” *Armed Forces and Society* 33, no. 4 (2007).

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, David Chandler, *International State-Building: The Rise of Post-Liberal Governance* (London: Routledge, 2010); or Paul Collier, *Wars, Guns & Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places* (London: Vintage Books, 2010).

<sup>33</sup> Bland refers to the sharing of responsibility for control between civilian leaders and military officers. See Bland, 9.

<sup>34</sup> Teri McConville, “The Principles of Management Applied to the Defence Sector,” in *Managing Defence in a Democracy*, ed. Laura R. Cleary and Teri McConville (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 109.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>36</sup> David Chuter, *Defence Transformation: A Short Guide to the Issues* (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2000).

<sup>37</sup> Robin Luckham, *Democratization in the South: The Jagged Wave* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1996), 14.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas C. Bruneau and Floriana Cristiana Matei, “Towards a New Conceptualization of Democratization and Civil-Military Relations,” *Democratization* 15, no. 5 (December 2008).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1957), 8–10.

<sup>41</sup> Over the last 8 years, I have asked thousands of military personnel in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Central and Eastern Europe to define what it means to be a *professional politician*. Nine times out of 10, their response is that “a professional politician is a professional liar.”

<sup>42</sup> Collier details the nature of politics for what he terms the *bottom billion*.

<sup>43</sup> Arch Puddington, “Freedom in the World 2011: The Authoritarian Challenge to Democracy,” available at <[www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=130&year=2011](http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=130&year=2011)>.

<sup>44</sup> Chandler, 22–42; R. Parris, *At War’s End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Robin Luckham, “Democratic Strategies for Security in Transition and Conflict,” in *Governing Insecurity: Democratic Control of the Military and Security Establishments in Transitional Democracies* (London: Zed Books, 2003), 3–28.

<sup>45</sup> Romie Frederick Littrell, “Cultural Mythology and Global Leadership in England,” in *Cultural Mythology and Global Leadership*, ed. Eric H. Kessler and Diana J. Wong-MingJi (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2009), 148.

<sup>46</sup> Eric H. Kessler and Diana J. Wong-MingJi, “Introduction to Cultural Mythology and Global Leadership,” in *Cultural Mythology and Global Leadership*, 12.

<sup>47</sup> Geert Hofstede, *Culture’s Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviours, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*, 2<sup>d</sup> ed. (London: Sage, 2001), 500.

<sup>48</sup> Fred O. Walumbwa and George O. Ndege, “Cultural Mythology and Global Leadership in Kenya,” in *Cultural Mythology and Global Leadership*, 234–235.

<sup>49</sup> Sarah Sands, “Sir Richard Dannatt: A Very Honest General,” *The Daily Mail*, October 12, 2006.

<sup>50</sup> Hofstede.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 108, 251.

<sup>52</sup> Paul du Gay, *In Praise of Bureaucracy* (London: Sage, 2000).

<sup>53</sup> Derek S. Reveron, *Exporting Security: International Engagement, Security Cooperation and the Changing Face of the U.S. Military* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2010); *Building Stability Overseas Strategy*.

<sup>54</sup> Laura R. Cleary, “Triggering Critical Mass: Identifying the Factors for a Successful Defence Transformation,” *Defence Studies* 11, no. 1 (2011), 43–65; Rory Stewart and Gerald Knauss, *Can Intervention Work?* (New York: Norton, 2011).